

Director Ora Abel-Russell Talks About Wisdomkeepers

I was born in Tiberius, Israel, when the State of Israel was born. Before moving to New York City, my childhood years were spent among the displaced Jews of Europe, Russia, the Middle East and North Africa – as well as among the Palestinians who were gradually “relocated.” The struggles I witnessed in Israel and the pain I felt for all my people, for we are all related, kindled within me spiritual longing and insights that emerged as a desire to heal and benefit others.

In 1989, driven by a dream, I traveled to Scotts Bluff, Nebraska, where I met Joe Brown Thunder, a full-blooded Lakota Being of extraordinary grace, who brought me to behold the sacred sites of the Black Hills of South Dakota, and instructed and guided me through the Lakota sacred ceremonies. Our journeys together became a storehouse of the history and culture of a beautiful and great people, now reduced to a class of deprived humans.

The Lakota, like the Jews and Palestinians, are a displaced people, victims of greed, war, religious and political oppression, and ultimately genocide. Pine Ridge Reservation, Cheyenne River Reservation, Crow Creek Reservation, Lower Brule Reservation, Rosebud Reservation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Reservation, Yankton Reservation, Flandreau Santee Reservation, are the inconceivable evidence of what has been done to ruin these noble people. But as the Lakota and all Native Americans work to regain their spirituality, their language, their foundation, their place in multiple, practical and universal arenas, each one of us must articulate our willingness to help.

WISDOMKEEPERS was borne and developed to motivate viewers, world-wide, to question, evaluate and perhaps reject the external *systems* that define human life without respecting all of it, and to forge spiritual possibilities that will protect all the spiritual universes borne within human beings.

It is incumbent upon us to right wrongs, and **WISDOMKEEPERS** is a call to prayer and healing. My mission was to prepare and produce a platform from which the Elders, the Wisdomkeepers, the tribal keepers of their oral spiritual traditions, could speak to us from their place in history. Here, they speak to us freely – without anger or malice, focusing on significant problems we all face today, and articulating a path that will allow each of us, as

spiritual entities to pursue moral choices that will develop the nobility of humankind.

Ora Able-Russell
November 2006